



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

1930 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
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EXHIBIT 6
DATE 1-15-07
~~SB~~ HB 92

January 15, 2007

House Human Services Committee
Representative Ron Stoker, Chairman

Re: HB 92 (Representative Franklin)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Melanie Reynolds and I am the Health Officer for Lewis and Clark County. Also, I am Chair-Elect of the new organization, AMPHO, the Association of Montana Health Officials, a statewide organization for health officers and lead local public health officials. The Lewis and Clark City- County Board of Health, County Commissioners, and Health Department would like to go on record in strong support of HB 92, a bill to modernize our state's public health statutes.

Public Health has changed in the last fifty years. For example, according to a public health report dated 1960 for Lewis and Clark County, the number of active tuberculosis cases numbered forty-six. In contrast, our county has had only two cases for the last five-year period. What we are seeing in Lewis and Clark County is an increase in diabetes and other chronic diseases and one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the state. The clearer, updated definition of "conditions of public health importance" reflects the issues we are dealing with in public health today. Not all public health conditions are communicable and the new definition of "conditions of public health importance" reflects today's public health.

The updated section on defining the collaboration and relationships among partners in the public health system is necessary and timely. No agency does it alone and outlining the state's agency role and local agency role is very important for getting public health work done in an effective and efficient way.

I have included with my testimony support letters from all of Lewis and Clark's County Commissioners as well a letter from our City-County Board of Health.

We urge your support of this important legislation.



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

"To Improve and Protect the Health of all Lewis and Clark County Residents."

Caring for our Community

Cooperative
Health Center



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Michael A. Murray Ed Tinsley Andy Hunthausen
City County Building 316 North Park Helena, Montana 59623 406.447.8304 Fax: 406.447.8307

January 11, 2007

Chairman Ron Stoker and Members of the Human Services Committee
Montana House of Representatives
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Stoker and Committee Members:

The Lewis and Clark Board of County Commissioners supports House Bill 92 which would modernize our state's public health statutes to reflect current public health practice. Over the last several years, Montana public health, medical and legal professionals, as well as policy makers have thoroughly reviewed and analyzed Montana's public health statutes and determined key areas in need of updating. Much of the language that describes the major public health powers of state and local agencies is outdated and vague and may not support current public health actions when implemented.

Also, Montana statutes and administrative rules focus on communicable disease control and sanitation, however, there is no general guidance for addressing diseases or conditions of current and future public health importance.

The County Commissioners, along with our Board of Health and Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department staff, work to promote a strong public health system that assures the necessary programs, services and protections to keep citizens in our county healthy.

Additionally, the Montana Association of Counties (MACO) passed a resolution at its September 2006 meeting in support of the public health modernization project. We would appreciate the committee's consideration and support of House Bill 92.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Murray, Chairman

Ed Tinsley, Vice-Chairman

Andy Hunthausen



LEWIS AND CLARK CITY-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

January 11, 2007

Chairman Ron Stoker and Members of the Human Services Committee
Montana House of Representatives
P.O. Box 200400
Helena MT 59620

Dear Chairman Stoker and Committee Members:

The Lewis and Clark City County Board of Health strongly supports HB 92, an act to modernize Montana's public health statutes to better reflect current public health practice. The Board believes the citizens of Lewis and Clark County expect and deserve public health protection and updating the statutes would be critical to assuring this protection.

A draft of this bill was reviewed and discussed by our Board of Health and professional health department staff in June 2006. The Board reviewed the key components of the Act which include a need for a basic purpose statement for the public health system, clearly delineating local public health authorities and responsibilities, and defining the standards for conditions of public health importance. We learned that much of the language that describes the powers and duties of state and local public health was written over 30 years ago. The statutes were written over the years in a piecemeal fashion and do not reflect some of the contemporary public health issues we may be address in the future such as pandemic influenza.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 92 and we would appreciate your vote to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Wintersteen".

Jennifer Wintersteen, Chair
Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health



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January 12, 2007

The Honorable Ron Stoker, Chairman
House of Representatives Human Services Committee
Montana State House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: House Bill 92 – An Act to Modernize Montana's Public Health Statutes

Dear Representative Stoker and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department strongly supports HB 92, which would modernize Montana's public health statutes. Our Board of Health carefully reviewed and discussed this bill in June and we believe that the changes proposed would assist our health department in protecting the public's health.

Much of the language that describes the major duties and powers of state and local public health agencies is outdated – some were last updated in the 1940s! Also the current statute takes a piecemeal approach to listing various functions of state and local agencies, with an emphasis on public health's traditional roles in communicable disease control, sanitation, and hygiene.

One of the key updates to the statute would include defining conditions of public health importance. Conditions of public health importance are defined as, "a disease, syndrome, symptom, injury, or other threat to health that is identifiable on an individual or community level and can reasonably be expected to lead to adverse health effects in the community." This definition is a forward-looking approach that assures the scope of public health powers beyond disease-specific classifications and that supports the inclusion of contemporary health threats.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at mreynolds@co.lewis-clark.mt.us or (406) 457-8910.

Sincerely,

Melanie Reynolds, M.P.H.
Health Officer
Lewis and Clark County